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## THE WHISTLER MEMORIAL EXHIBITION\*

Exactly according to schedule the Whistler memorial exhibition opened at Copley Hall, Boston, on February 23. The opening night was of course one of the social events of the season. Art is very



PORTRAITS OF WHISTLER  
By Mortimer Menpes  
From an Etching

much in society in Boston and so brilliant an assemblage one would see scarcely anywhere else. Certainly in New York not even the most important of art exhibitions ever brings together so many distinguished people in one hall, for besides the local attendance, any number of folk from other cities were present. Artists of national reputation were as thick upon the floor as huckleberries in an August pasture. Owners of Mr. Whistler's pictures from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Detroit, and Chicago smiled benignly on the crowd. It was in reality a great

national gathering of people interested in the fine arts generally and Whistler specifically. It was a very notable tribute to the artist.

\* In addition to new reproductions, a few plates from the special Whistler number of *BRUSH AND PENCIL*, of which the demand soon exhausted a double edition, and which for some months has been out of print, have been selected to illustrate this review of the memorial exhibition.

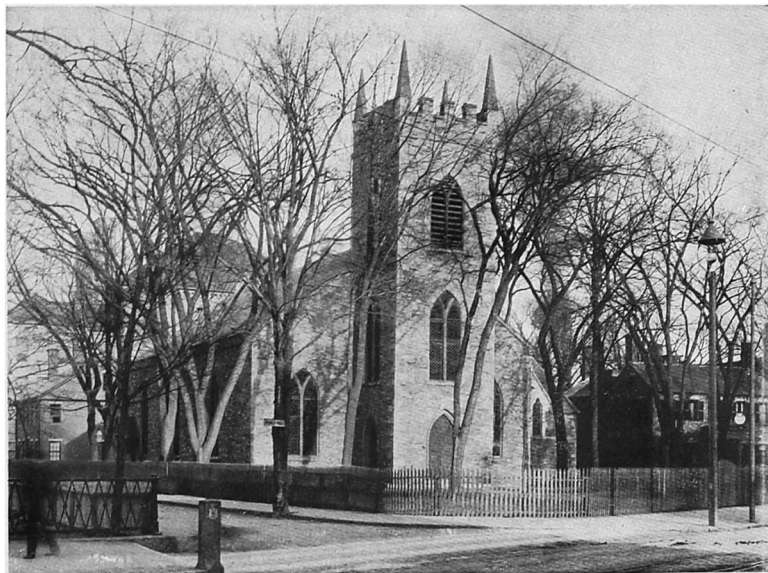
It may be well to record here for future reference—such an exhibition will likely never again be given—the names of those under whose auspices the collection has been offered to the public. The honorary committee serving on the exhibition was composed of Governor Bates, Mayor Collins, Sir Henry Mortimer Durand, ambassador of Great Britain; M. J. J. Jusserand, ambassador of the French Republic; Secretary of State John Hay; Senator Henry Cabot Lodge; John Caldwell of the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburg; Edward H. Coates, president of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts; Halsey C. Ives, chief of the department of art, St. Louis Exposition; F. W. Rhinelander, president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Samuel Dennis Warren, president of the Museum of Fine Arts; Edwin A. Abbey, London; R. B. Angus, Montreal; Samuel P. Avery, New York; Francis Bartlett, Boston; Miss Rosalind Birnie-Philip, London; Arthur J. Eddy, Chicago; Hon. George A. Drummond, Montreal; Charles L. Freer, Detroit; John L. Gardner, Boston; Walter Gay, Paris; Henry O. Havemeyer, New York; Charles L. Hutchinson, Chicago; John G. Johnson, New York; Bryan Lathrop, Chicago; Howard Mansfield, New York; Harrison S. Morris, Philadelphia; Professor Charles Eliot Norton, Cambridge; Joseph Pennell, London; Alfred A. Pope, Farmington; Edward Robinson, Boston; Denman W. Ross, Cambridge; James Ross, Montreal; Augustus Saint Gaudens, Windsor; John S. Sargent, London; Joshua Montgomery Sears, Boston; Arthur Studd, London; George W. Vanderbilt, New York; Henry Walters, Baltimore, Mrs. Henry Whitman, Boston; and Mrs. Harris Whittemore, Naugatuck.

But the exhibition itself? What was it like? What was it worth to the community in which it was given, and to the great number of people from farther away who were in attendance? To describe the pictures, lithographs, and etchings that were in it at any great length would be needlessly to duplicate the matter contained in BRUSH AND PENCIL'S excellent Whistler articles of last summer. Enough to say that the much heralded pictures from Mr. Whistler's studio which have never before been seen by the public came fully up to general expectation, and that the contributions from the galleries of Mr. Freer, Mr. Canfield, Mr. Whittemore, Mr. Eddy, and the other enthusiastic American collectors of the master's works made the exhibition an extremely notable one.

R. A. Canfield's portrait was not exhibited, but his collection was the most important one from New York. Among his paintings were "Miss Rosa Corder," "Le Comte Robert de Montesquieu Fezensac," "St. Marc Nocturne," "Pastel in Violet and Blue," and "Symphony in Gray and Green—the Ocean." A portrait of Whistler, owned by S. P. Avery, was a notable feature from Gotham. H. O. Havemeyer sent three small paintings, with some select water-colors.

From Philadelphia came A. G. Cassatt's "Chelsea Girl," J. G.

Johnson's "Lange Leizen," "Purple and Rose," P. A. B. Widener's "Nocturne." G. M. Hutton of Baltimore offered "Wapping," and Ross Whistler sent a landscape. From Pittsburg the Carnegie Art Institute forwarded the celebrated "Sarasarte." A. J. Eddy of Chicago, one of the highest authorities on Whistler, brought his portrait. Also from Chicago came J. H. Wrenn's "Baby Leyland," a marine owned by the Art Institute, and Mrs. Potter Palmer's "Old



ST. ANN'S CHURCH, LOWELL, MASS.,  
Records Baptism of Whistler

Battersea Reach." "Music Room," owned by F. J. Hecker of Detroit, proved to be a notable painting. Canada was represented by "A Girl in Red," owned by G. A. Drummond of Montreal. From London came a number of pictures sent by Miss Rosalind Birnie-Philip, including Whistler's portrait and "Le Petit Cardinal," Arthur Studd's "The Little White Girl" and "Chelsea Reach," "Blue and Gold," and T. R. Way's "Cremorne Gardens."

Probably the most interesting of the whole exhibition was the loan of C. L. Freer of Detroit, who contributed, besides his own portrait, "The Princess of the Land of Porcelain," "The Thames in Ice," "Southampton Water," "Gray and Silver Nocturne—Battersea Reach," "Gray and Silver Nocturne—Chelsea Embankment," "La

1834

Oct. 7. Baptized Mariann daughter  
of James and Elizabeth Lung.  
Sponsors the mother and Mr. Gilbert  
J. Edson

Oct. 12. Baptized Robert and Maryann children  
of Robert and Mary Ann Loubey  
Sponsors the parents

" Baptized Elizabeth Sarah and Thomas  
Jefferson children of Joseph and Rose Oddy  
Sponsors the parents

" Baptized Mary Ann and Elizabeth  
children of Humphrey and Mary  
Hughes Sponsors the parents  
J. Edson

Oct. 15. Married Samuel S. Keyser to Elizabeth  
Hyman - he of Baltimore M. d. she  
of Lowell  
J. Edson

Oct. 22. Baptized Emma infant daughter  
of Joseph and Elizabeth Bushmay  
J. Edson

Nov. 9. Baptized James Abbott infant son of  
George Washington and Anna Matilda Whistler  
Sponsors - the parents  
J. Edson

# SKETCH OF WHISTLER AS PRINTED IN THE FIRST EDITION OF "WHO'S WHO IN AMERICA"

Whistler, James Abbott McNeill, portrait painter; b. Lowell, Mass., 1834; ed. West Point; studied in Paris under Gleyre, 1857. Began to exhibit at Royal Acad., 1859; held exhibitions of his own in London, 1874 and 1892; chevalier 1889, and officer, 1891, Legion of Honor of France; has been pres. Soc. of British Artists; mem. Munich Acad.; sued Ruskin and secured verdict against him for attack on him and his art in "Fors Clavigera." Has painted many noted portraits. Noted as etcher and dry pointer. Author: Ten O'clock; The Gentle Art of Making Enemies. Address: 110 Rue de Bac, Paris, France.

## FOREGOING AMENDED BY WHISTLER FOR SECOND EDITION OF "WHO'S WHO IN AMERICA"

WHISTLER, James ~~McNeill~~ <sup>of Baltimore</sup> ~~Portrait painter; b. Lowell, Mass., 1834; ed. West Point; studied in Paris under Gleyre, 1857. Began to exhibit at Royal Acad., 1859; held exhibitions of his own in London, 1874 and 1892; chevalier 1889, and officer, 1891, Legion of Honor of France; has been pres. Soc. of British Artists; mem. Munich Acad.; sued Ruskin and secured verdict against him for attack on him and his art in "Fors Clavigera." Has painted many noted portraits. Noted as etcher and dry pointer. Author: Ten O'clock; The Gentle Art of Making Enemies. Address: 110 Rue de Bac, Paris, France.~~  
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<sup>Pupil of Gleyre</sup>  
<sup>Capt. 10</sup>  
<sup>Officer of the</sup>

Painter: Son of Major George Washington Whistler. Mother's family, McNeill of S. Carolina.

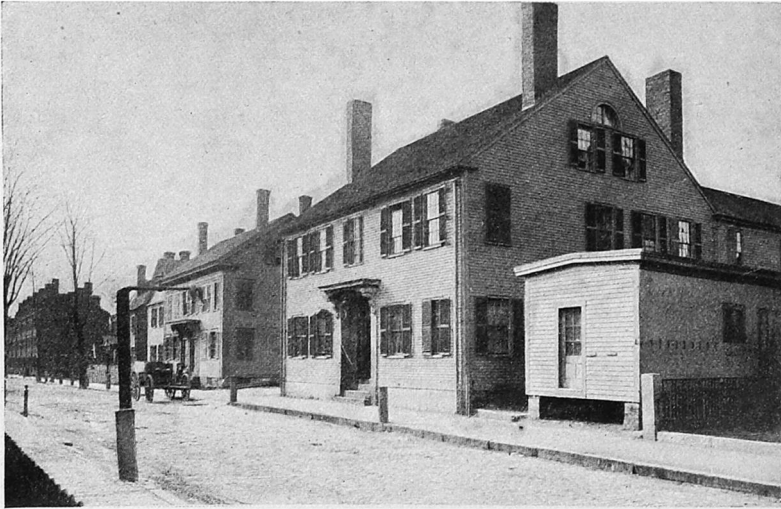
Legion of Honor

1891 Knight of the Order of St. Michael Bavaria.  
 Hon. Member Royal Academy of St. Luke, Rome.  
 Member Societe Nationale des Beaux Arts France -  
 President International Society Sculptors Painters & Engravers - England.  
 Grand Prix Exposition Universelle 1889.

"The Butterfly & the Bardsnet"

Paintings:  
 Portrait of his Mother, Luxembourg Gallery.  
 Carlyle - Glasgow Gallery - and others  
 Etchings - British Museum - Venice Academie  
 Dresden Galleries  
 Bibliotèque Nationale, etc.

Cigale," "The White Symphony," "The Little Blue and Gold Girl," a few other oils and some water-colors. Among the Boston owners represented were F. G. Macomber, with "Une Jeune Fille des Rues," and a water-color, "The Thames," "Silver and Blue." Denman Ross sent "Chelsea—a Street Scene," and Mrs. Montgomery Sears "A Street in Chelsea," and a marine. Other Boston contributors were Mrs. Hollis French, Mrs. J. C. Bancroft, Mrs. Martin Brimmer,

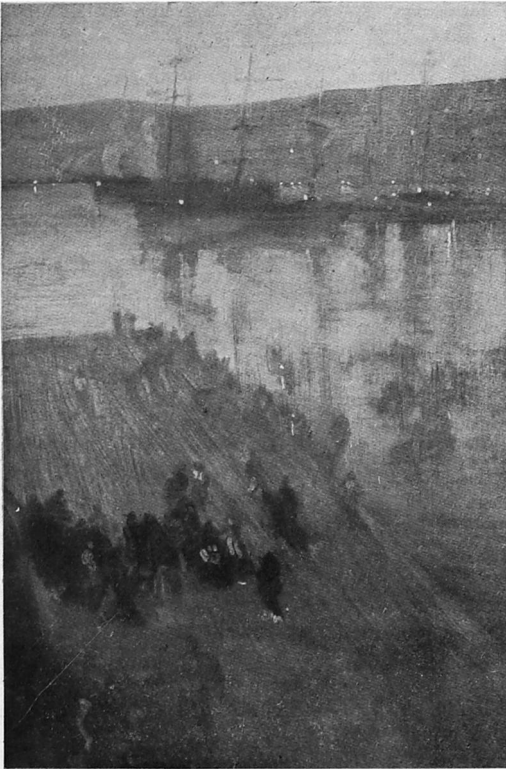


THE HOUSE IN WHICH WHISTLER WAS BORN, LOWELL, MASS.  
From a Photograph

Francis Bartlett, and Miss Hooper. The Museum of Fine Arts sent "The Blacksmith" and "The Little Rose of Lyme-Regis." J. H. Whittemore of Naugatuck contributed "The Andalusian" and "The White Girl."

It seems to have been generally agreed among the critics that Mr. Whistler's fame will prove to have been greatly enhanced by this memorial exhibition. The old-time controversies as to his art and his personality may not cease for some time to come, but it is hardly to be doubted that this country, in which he was born, will henceforth recognize in Whistler one of the greatest artists who have ever lived. He is not Velasquez, not Rembrandt, not Millet. Less than these because in certain essential respects he was a lesser man, he still had powers which put him not far out of their class. To see so great a body of his work together, to have the chance to appreciate the marvelous versatility of the man and his really profound sym-

pathy with many of the aspects of life, is sufficient to make most artists and most people who understand art, even in a slight degree, appreciate somewhat his unique position among the painters of the nineteenth century, a position unique in very many senses.



NOCTURNE—BLUE AND GOLD  
By J. McNeill Whistler

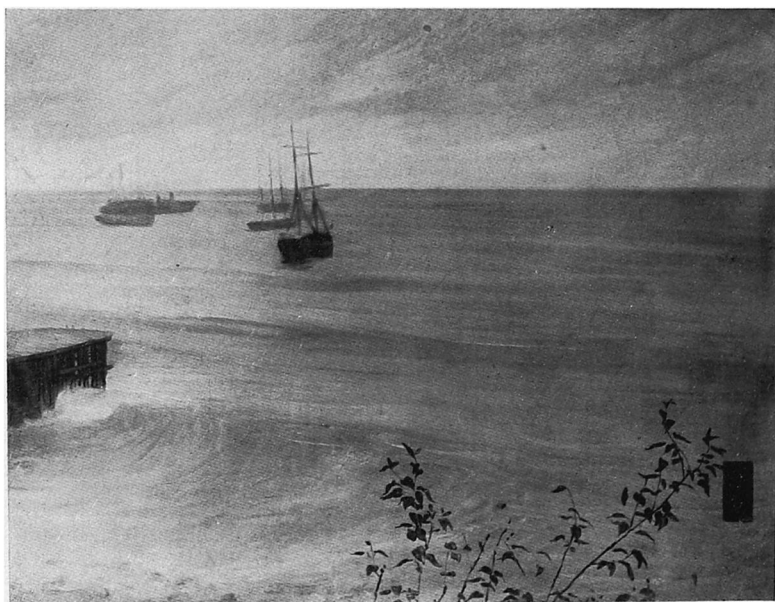
But the man in the street? What of him? When this man stepped in from the sloppy, unlovely Boston street of mid-February to the hall, decorated in accordance with a scheme which we may believe Mr. Whistler would himself have approved—what was his impression? Did he by word of mouth accept as works of genius what he secretly regarded as sheer poppycock? Did he exclaim, as I heard one nice looking young fellow exclaim on the opening night, when he got a glimpse of one of the famous nocturnes, "Well, I suppose that's something pretty fine; but give me Alma-Tadema."

The psychology of the attitude of the man in the street toward art has been so little investigated that we had probably better give it up. Enough to say that this man has been to the Whistler exhibition with wife and daughters—or, rather, the wife and daughters have flocked thither with him *vi et armis* for the good of his general culture—and that he, seeing there was no escape, has endeavored duly to admire the auburn-haired "White Girl," the "Princess of Porcelain," with the uncanny face, and the retiring and unobtrusive





CHELSEA IN ICE  
By J. McNeill Whistler



SYMPHONY IN GRAY AND GREEN  
By J. McNeill Whistler

young person whom Whistler called a "Harmony in Red." He has noted with astonishment that there is very little "shading," such as he learned to do in the free evening drawing school twenty-three years ago, in the figure of the "Fur Jacket," and he has wondered why a man who apparently did not know enough to paint all the wrinkles anybody with half an eye can see there are in a garment, should be regarded as such a great artist. The nocturnes in various harmonies of color have appealed to him much less strongly than some of the good pictures of almost any art club show in which he can easily recognize Great Blue Hill and the meadows of the Neponset, the ledges at Nahant or picturesque spots along the Charles, where he has been accustomed to idle away his Saturday afternoons in the "good old summer time." In such respects his attitude has no doubt deserved the cant phrase now current, it is "just Boston."

Opinions will naturally differ as to the importance and significance of this exhibition, and one may reasonably expect a great diversity of critical judgments. Without venturing to advance personal views, it may be of interest to the reader for me to cite here a couple of such expressions of opinion that have been brought to my attention as indicative of the estimate of well-informed and conscientious writers. "The memorial exhibition of the work of the late James Abbott McNeill Whistler is an affair of both national and international importance," says the Boston Herald. "As such it ranks as one of the most notable events of the year in the world of the fine arts. . . . No event in the series of American exhibitions has been of greater importance, or has had so fine a significance as the present exhibition of Whistler's work. Whistler was a master of very high rank. There are many excellent judges of art who do not hesitate to give him place with the world's foremost. The fact that he was born in Massachusetts makes it peculiarly appropriate that his memory should be honored in Boston in a manner that forms one of the finest tributes to his genius. . . .

"There were aspects of Whistler's personality that tended to divert public attention from the artist to the man. But time is dealing kindly with his memory in this respect. Viewed in the saner perspective that regards a man whose work in the world is done with, the personal peculiarities, the animosities and antagonisms that characterized Whistler's relations with many of his fellows are now seen to be unessentials, while his qualities as an artist are estimated in their true values, without reference to ephemeral concerns. The latter were more or less sensational, but the art of Whistler was strikingly void of every implication of sensationalism. Whistler had the highest respect for his art, and he never trifled with it. No worldly consideration could induce him to lower his standard or sacrifice his ideals. He was guided to his results by the profoundest convictions. There was nothing of affectation in the designations for

his works that he was pleased to employ. His "arrangements," "symphonies," "nocturnes," and the like were terms selected in accordance with a fine sense of qualities common to the art of music and that of painting, as expressed in tone relations and values of color, tint, texture, and shading.

"Whistler's art is distinguished by exquisite refinement, by the most delicately balanced adjustments of values, a wonderful graciousness and purity that tended to expression in qualities of inherent beauty which developed the finest possibilities resident in the suggestions of a given subject. Technically Whistler's mastery was complete. He achieved his results with the greatest directness and the most absolute confidence. His command of expression was perfect; he always said clearly and precisely exactly what he wished to say. He never abused this gift; his fluency never led him to what in his art is the equivalent of wordiness, but practiced a fine restraint whereby he expressed with the sententiousness of a poet manifest in the clearest verse simply what his trained imagination prompted him to express, and no more.

"One of the greatest of Whistler's services was as a pioneer in the exploitation of the wonderful resources of the art of the Far East as developed by the Japanese and the Chinese. He was the first to perceive the possibilities for western art that lay in going to school with the masters of the East, thereby making available the methods and the resources of Japan and China, adapting their qualities to the moods of the western temperament. Whistler fused the art of the Orient with that of the Occident, developing new forms and modes of expression informed with the qualities of both, and manifesting a new sense of universality in art that before him had never been suspected. The path that he entered upon has since been followed by many others, with a corresponding widening of the world's vistas in the field of art."

This is well-tempered eulogy. Equally well-tempered criticism finds expression elsewhere, and is worth quoting. "Obviously the enumeration of even the salient things exhibited would constitute a task by itself, and one that at this distance especially could serve no useful purpose. But the truth is," says the New York Tribune, "that the whole point of the show lies not in its embracing this or that well-known or little-known picture, but in its curiously drastic reopening of what may fairly be called the Whistlerian question. For his headlong partisans, of course, no such question exists. For them Whistler is simply and conclusively the master, and the exhibition in Copley Hall is only a sort of spectacular ratification of his principles and his fame.

"The observer who is not given over to unreasoning admiration of the painter cannot but feel, on the other hand, as he goes carefully through this great body of work, that here is a man who does not



SYMPHONY IN WHITE, No. III.  
By J. McNeill Whistler



CAPRICE IN PURPLE AND GOLD  
By J. McNeill Whistler

belong among the Olympians, clear eyed and sure headed, knowing just what he wants to do and doing it with unwavering authority, but a man who was 'feeling his way' all his life long, and produced a masterpiece only when he happened to have a happy moment. The happy moment, it is plain, was often long in coming. In other words, you may come here simply to admire, and while you will find much to command admiration and, moreover, profound respect, you will stay to question, to revise old impressions, to strike a new balance. One feeling must remain unchanged. Nothing can obscure or in any way modify the fact that Whistler belonged to the race of men of genius. One thinks of Balzac's poignant exclamation, '*Sans génie je suis flambé!*' Without the flame of inspiration that was in him Whistler would have been lost. But this exhibition, so enthusiastically and even reverently put together, does more than was ever done by any of his foes to suggest that the flame did not burn from beginning to end with a steady glow; it was fitful, sometimes smoky, and sometimes reduced to a feeble flicker. It would not be surprising if the reaction against him which has been gathering force for some time in diverse quarters were to be dated by future historians from the opening of this exhibition. . . .

"What is it that makes a great picture independent of its frame? Several things, as, beauty or style, but above all things, it is power—the elements of human life are seized by a master hand and expressed on canvas with such truth and strength that their inherent vitality is not reduced, but is really glorified and made far more impressive.



THE LANGE LEIZEN  
By J. McNeill Whistler

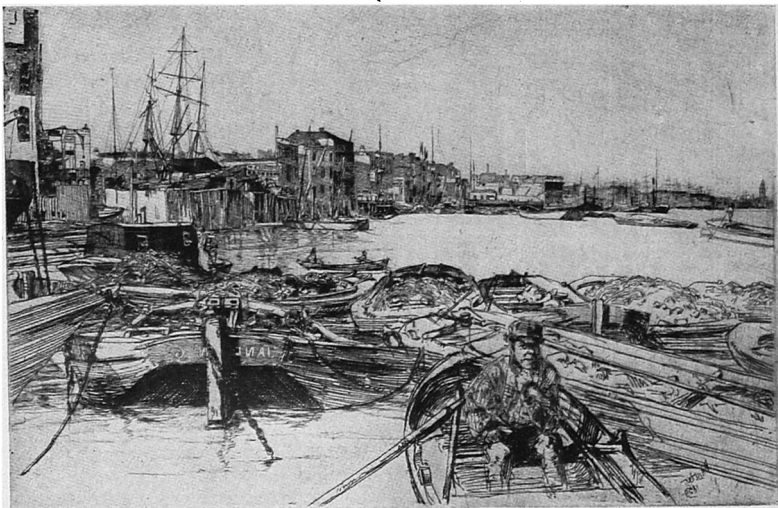
That Whistler had this strength and truth can be asserted in the presence of only a few of his paintings, such as the two portraits, his mother and Carlyle, at Paris and Glasgow, and even then certain qualifications are necessarily to be made. Here in this exhibition I have been struck anew by the absence of the supremely authoritative note from his painting. No one would dream of asking that the butterfly should have been an eagle, that Whistler should have been something totally different from what he was. But this exhibition embodies a kind of challenge; it shows us Whistler for the first time actually at full length, so to say, and it compels us, as we have never been compelled before, to consider just where he stands, at just what point in the hierarchy he is to be placed. I do not see how any candid critic can escape the conviction that the point is much lower than he expected to find it.

"Take, for example, the nudes. We have all heard a great deal of these rare productions of his and of the revelation they were to make of his extraordinary powers. As a matter of fact, there is nothing in the exhibition to show that he had any power at all in the modeling of the nude figure. On the contrary, it is plain that this last and most searching test of an artist's capacity left him defeated and saving, at most, an engaging note of color from the wreck. The pictures which were to show him in a new light as a colorist, which were to prove that his scope embraced harmonies much more sumptuous than those generally associated with his name, are also disappointing. These things only go to confirm the idea of Whistler as a painter who could not deal with the nude and could not be vivid in color because he did not know how, because he wanted knowledge, force, grip—the forthright brush of the man who knows all the secrets of painting, is brimming over with vitality as well as with skill, and cannot only solve a problem of form and color with ease, but make the result actually live and breathe upon the canvas. The thing that Whistler does at his best is an affair of life receding steadily into a dim perspective and leaving, as it goes, a delicate impression woven of frail form and of tone almost vaporous in its subtlety. . . .

"In the majority of cases Whistler was content to be merely enchanting, merely a magician using truth as a point of departure for the evolution of a scheme of tonality which seems, in the last resort, as though it had been invented by him with practically no reference to actual phenomena. He did with nature what he chose to do, and her truths were no concern of his when once they had given him a suggestion.

"In portraiture he might seem, on a superficial scrutiny of the canvases here, to have been moved, on occasion at least, by a different impulse. His 'Little Rose of Lyme-Regis' is a very human little creature, and 'The Master Smith of Lyme-Regis' is another instance of his rare willingness to study his model in a merely natural light.

But the bulk of his portraiture belongs in another category. It means figures generally in dark clothes, studied against dark backgrounds, and used as pegs whereon to hang somber harmonies of tone. The harmonies are very beautiful. They are pure and simple, and they are worked out with such subtlety and with so original a touch, they are so distinguished, that it is easy to understand how this master of delicate effects has been the despair of his imitators. No one else in modern art has ever done this sort of thing so well. But never before



THE POOL

By J. McNeill Whistler

Thames Series of Etchings

this exhibition was opened did it somehow seem so necessary to ask just what this sort of thing is worth. It is worth so much in Whistler's hands, he makes it so fascinating, that almost we are persuaded of its being one of the great things in art. Almost, but not quite. That, I believe, is the fact which is most likely to emerge from the discussion of Whistler which this exhibition is certain to cause. The show clarifies the situation; it enables us to walk around Whistler's art, and to see it for what it is, and in increasing public understanding of him it will do the best possible service to his fame. It may even rationalize, to some extent, the deliverances of those naïve acolytes who have been making him ridiculous by setting him on a pedestal which even a much greater man might find embarrassingly high."

FREDERICK W. COBURN.